

use of special means; there may have been some partial relaxation in practice in the French ports, but there has not been such an authentic, unequivocal, effectual repeal as this government was entitled to demand.

The late repeal signed by the emperor himself, which as arrived since the adjournment of Congress, and been followed by the repeal of the British orders in council, is conclusive evidence that no sufficient repeal had before been made. Without a repeal on paper or in fact of French edicts, without a cessation of hostilities or injustice on the high seas, without a fair commerce with France, with full evidence that the French government had failed to perform their engagement in any respect, and at a time when the country was unprepared to make war, was the American Congress called upon to comply with every thing France had demanded—war with England and a continuance of the non importation system. Under such circumstances to select Great Britain as an enemy, without any change in our relations with France, appeared to me to be submission to the edicts, will and artifices of France, to surrender a trade with Great Britain amounting to 30 or 40 millions, for the mere chance of a trade with France worth little or nothing, a sacrifice of the public interest, and after threatening to take Canada for six or eight months, to plunge the country into the contest without being prepared to execute our threats, an act of precipitancy for which no sufficient apology could be made. We had besides much property in England and on the ocean. The basis too upon which we proceeded, the promised and expected justice of France, was false—nor could I see how it was less submission in 1812 than it would have been in 1808, according to the declarations of the committee of foreign relations—when to the Berlin and Milan decrees, France had not only added the Bayonne and Rambouillet decrees, but fraud and treachery. That I was averse to the war is true; and that my vote was in unison with my opinion, my enemies will, I suppose, admit.

Although I did not believe as many did in the expediency of embarking in a crusade about neutral rights, as so much had been said about war, I had made up my mind to vote for it on any honorable ground, against Great Britain alone, if France had fulfilled our just and reasonable expectation; against both if she failed; and this course I thought consistent with the principles, and professions, of the government, and certainly with my own view. That I was in favor of revoking the arrangement with France and placing the two nations on the same footing if she did not act with solid faith, will appear by my votes of the last and preceding sessions. That the President was deceived into a departure from our neutrality must be evident, from the late French decree, by which it appears that the Berlin and Milan decrees were not repealed on the 1st day of November 1810, as the President had declared by proclamation. When the war bill came to the Senate I moved to insert France, and if it had succeeded I would have confined the war to the ocean until the next meeting of Congress. I thought this course demanded by honor, consistency, and expediency, and if pursued France would have respected us more, we should have respected ourselves more; it would have banished all suspicion and jealousy of the existence of any partiality in our councils with regard to any foreign nation; it would have produced more union and confidence at home and enabled the government to put forth the united energies of the country with more effect; and as an alliance with France was disclaimed, as our prizes could not be sold in French ports, I could not see the force of the objections to notice France. Especially too, as it was avowed to be a war for honor in which all calculations of profit, and loss, or consequences were denounced as mean and contemptible, and unworthy a patriot's regard. It was a course equally demanded by public sentiment and public expectation.

I was said we had a right to select our enemy. Grant this: If we had selected Great Britain of our own accord, the argument would be entitled to some weight; but after telling both belligerents that we would not select an enemy unless one of them would do us justice, and after having based our measures on the promises of France, was it honorable, was it consistent, to yield to her views, after a full knowledge of her attempt to strike us from our neutral attitude, when the step was to be attended not only with an immense loss of blood and treasure, but the loss of a lucrative commerce, without the prospect of an equivalent in a fair one with France? To my mind neither our honor or interest justified it. I have ever excused the president for issuing his proclamation, on the score of motive at least—and yielded to many of the measures which followed it, with a confident expectation that if France failed on her part, we should convince her, and the world, that we were neither to be driven nor tricked from our neutrality, by an insincere manœuvring policy.

That part of the President's war message which notices France merits a moment's attention. The president says that France had authorized the capture of our vessels and citizens, that no indemnity had been provided for the property seized within the jurisdiction of France but on account of unclosed discussions with her, he recommended war with Great Britain, and to wait the result of the negotiation with France. Now, look at it fairly. France urges us to go to war with England, and declare war for us.—We refuse to comply—tell her, and the world that it would be dishonourable to yield to her views, unless she will first do us justice, and respect our rights. To accomplish her purpose, she promises to do it. We proceed on the promise, but before we take the final step, we discover that it was an artifice, a false pretence; and then, with our eyes open, we submit to every thing she requires, notwithstanding all the fuss and noise about honor. I ask if it is not a retreat from our ground, and a clear surrender of the point of honour? Had the conduct of France been ambiguous, I should not have pressed the proposition to insert France; but when, according to the declaration of the president, all doubts had been banished, as both belligerents were depreeding on our commerce, the plain, honourable, American course, appeared to us to authorise our merchants to make reprisals

on both. Had that course been adopted, no man would have supported it with more zeal than myself.

From this view, I trust I have made it apparent, that in the course I pursued, I have been consistent with myself, and the principles avowed by the party and the administration. There are some other topics introduced into the catalogue of causes of war, which demand some attention. One which has awakened much sensibility in the nation is the impressment of seamen.

The difficulty between the two governments on this point, has appeared to me rather a matter of form than substance. Many British seamen have been employed in our service, who have entered voluntarily. Many of our seamen are in the service of Great Britain, who have been impressed from our merchant vessels. The employment of British seamen in our service, is the pretext for impressing from our vessels. Great Britain considering her seamen her property, the staff and shield of her empire, denies the right of expatriation; and once a subject, always a subject, is a maxim of both the British and French governments, and indeed of the whole civilized world. This principle it is unnecessary to discuss, unless we are under a moral or political obligation, or disposed from motives of policy, to wage war for the protection of British seamen employed in our merchant service.

I know it is the opinion of the wisest and best men with whom I have ever conversed, that sound policy dictated the exclusive employment of native seamen in all our foreign commerce. Great Britain does not claim the right to impress American seamen; on the contrary she disclaims any such pretensions, but insists on the right of taking her seamen within her jurisdiction, and from merchant vessels on the high seas, where all nations have a common jurisdiction. In the exercise of this right, owing to the similarity of languages, features, and manners, the improper conduct of officers, &c. many of our seamen have been impressed. This is an evidence which demands a remedy. In the year 1805, Messrs. Monroe and Pinckney, two of the members of the present administration, were especially instructed to negotiate on the subject of impressment with the British government, then under the administration of Mr. Fox & friends, better disposed towards this country than any ministry since the peace of eighty-three. Our ministers pressed a relinquishment of the right of search for seamen. The British ministry objected, that it was a right which the government had so often asserted, and to which the nation was so much attached, that they could not disclaim it without assuming a responsibility which no ministry would be willing to meet; but that they would waive the principle, and entertain any arrangement which would produce a discontinuance of the practice of impressment, and prevent the employment of British seamen in our service. After much discussion, the subject was arranged to the satisfaction of our ministers, on terms which they thought highly honorable and advantageous to the United States, and they recommended the arrangement to the acceptance of the administration; but it was rejected on the ground that the right of search was not disclaimed or relinquished. Our ministers remark, in their letter to Mr. Madison, that although the British government did not feel itself authorized to relinquish formally, by treaty, its claim to search our merchant vessels for British seamen, its practice would nevertheless be essentially if not completely abandoned. They observed however, that much would depend on the means taken by congress to check desertion from the British service. There is reason to believe that if the arrangement had been accepted by our government, and executed with sincerity and good faith on both sides, it would, in practice, very soon have effectuated the objects of both countries. Thus, it will be perceived, that a dispute about the right of search has deprived our native seamen of an important security which might have been obtained. Both parties were perhaps too tenacious of the principle. When we consider that the pride and sensibilities of the British nation, are alive to every question touching their naval power, considered the bulwark of their safety and greatness, we ought not to be surprised that the British ministry were reluctant to hazard a formal concession of a principle to which so much importance had been attached. But as they were willing to waive it, leaving each at liberty to assert it at any future time, and to make an informal arrangement to secure our seamen from impressment, and pledging each other to adopt the best means to secure to each country the services of its own seamen, the avowed object of both; it appears to me it would have been good policy to have made an experiment of it. That the present administration did not believe war necessary to adjust this matter, that they did not intend to go to war about the seamen, is evident, from their proceedings for the last five years. Although the subject was incidentally introduced on several occasions, it was not the basis of either the embargo or non-intercourse, nor was the adjustment of impressment made a condition of the repeal of any of the restrictive measures.

Another subject of complaint is that of extended blockades. Although France has used Mr. Fox's blockades of May, 1806, as a pretext to justify her Berlin decree, yet as our government did not complain of it, or any other existing blockade, nor refer to it as a basis for any of the restrictive measures, it cannot be deemed a substantial cause of war. The object of our government in relation to this point must be to settle the definition and rules of blockade. This cause of complaint lies much deeper, I believe, than is generally apprehended. It is rooted in the present condition of Europe. England is dominant at sea, France on land. So long as these two powers continue to wage war, and Great Britain maintains her present maritime ascendancy, however she may for a time relax or modify, she will in some shape or other assert in practice, if not on paper, the right as incident to her naval power to blockade her enemy, and this pretension is no less identified with commercial jealousy than national pride. Every Englishman feels a pride that the British navy is competent to blockade France and make her dependant on England for foreign commerce. From

the disposition manifested by all parties in England I am induced to believe that this question is more difficult to adjust, as regards the principle, than any between the two governments.

I have said that I was averse to embarking in a war about neutral rights in the present state of the world. Europe seemed by common consent to have repealed the law of nations, to have set at defiance all the ordinary rules of public law by which commerce had been regulated; and it therefore appeared to me impolitic for this young, free, and growing people to engage in a war, to controvert the policy of the European world. The question was put to this government, and we were required to take sides. We could have chosen an ally, an enemy, or maintained our neutrality. We chose the latter course, and expressly declared to the world that we would maintain it, and that we would not select an enemy unless one of the powers would change its policy. On this subject I have had but one opinion, for the last three years from the most attentive consideration I could give it. I have thought, from the nature of the contest, and the probable object of the contending powers, that it was unwise for this country to participate in the quarrel and that the interest and happiness of this people forbid us to yield to the views of either by becoming a party in the war. In doing so, I feared that we would be the appendage, or ally of one of them until a general peace in Europe. Every consideration seemed to admonish us not to plunge into the vortex of European conflict, in which had already been engulfed the sovereignty and independence of so many nations. I shall here be met by the cant phrase that we must not submit. The perversion and misapplication of terms have done much mischief among mankind. But let us inquire to what we have submitted; The war in Europe has lasted for twenty years with little intermission, and generally during that time we have submitted to remain neutral, (although we have had frequent causes of war,) and to reap a richer harvest than any nation ever did before. Our commerce with the powers at war, like that of every other neutral nation in former wars, has been subject to much vexatious embarrassment, owing to the means used by belligerents to annoy and distress each other; but still it has flourished when left free from the restrictions of our government. It may not be amiss here to remark that during a great part of the year 1810, when these decrees and orders were in force, we had neither embargo or non-intercourse, and yet we had an extensive commerce, and Kentucky enjoyed a degree of prosperity never before witnessed. I state this fact to prove how much the people have been deceived with regard to the practical effect of these blockades beyond the Atlantic, upon the general prosperity of the country. We have indeed submitted to see our commerce expand, our navigation increase, our agriculture, manufactures and improvements progress in a manner unparalleled in the history of the world. While the fatal friendships of England, and the grinding oppressions of France, have been ascending in secret or open execrations to heaven from every corner of Europe, we have submitted to remain unshackled by any entangling alliance with either. Our government has hitherto had wisdom and firmness enough to resist the dictation and wily endeavours of both to draw us into the quarrel. While Europe has been convulsed andrenched in blood, while the earnings of honest industry have been taken to support wars of ambition and interest, we have submitted to stand on our own ground and enjoy the fruit of our labours.

While the people in the Old World have been groaning beneath the iron hand of despotism, we have seen our land gladdened with liberty, peace and plenty, every man enjoying share of the sovereign power, and walking forth in the dignity of his nature, unawed by licentious mobs or military power. To all these things we have indeed submitted. Our situation has not been duly estimated by ourselves: it is the envy of all Europe, and even those nations beyond the Atlantic, who have no independence left of their own look with some consolation and applause upon the successful preservation of ours. The government, after having so long revolved upon its own axis, unmoved by the conflicts of foreign ambition, has at last, by the artifices of a foreign nation, been shipped from its moorings, and is probably destined to suffer many of the calamities with which continental Europe has been scourged. And for what? For a trade with France, which if every interdiction was removed is not worth a contest, without a material change in her policy—surrendering at the same time a commerce better than we shall have upon a general peace. You have been told of the immense losses of our merchants, and yet, wonderful to relate, our commerce and navigation is rapidly increasing, and our merchants are begging to be let alone.—You have been often told, that our losses have been unexampled.—But, gentlemen, our policy has been the same with every wise nation which has preceded us. It has been generally found the interest of a neutral nation, to remain so, notwithstanding occasional losses. I would, not, however, have admitted the pretensions of the belligerents. I would have kept up continual protest in some form, leaving commerce to individual enterprise, with the aid of such naval protection on our own coasts, as was practicable and convenient. The Yankees, by their wits and arms, would have carried on an extensive commerce, notwithstanding the hazards to which it was exposed.

I intended to have noticed some other topics to which the public attention has been called, with some additional considerations for opposing this war measure, but to attempt it at this late hour would be an unreasonable trespass upon your patience. Gentlemen, we are at war, and whatever difference of opinion may exist about the policy or necessity of it, every American ought to put his shoulder to the wheel, to redeem our country from the dangers and difficulties which menace it. I certainly never expected to derive any commercial advantages from this contest; because I believed we had a better commerce before it commenced, than we shall upon a general peace. I had hoped however, that a war commenced upon principles calculated to inspire confidence and produce union, might have a good effect upon our

selves. I deem it of the highest importance that the war on our side, while it continues, should be well sustained. It would be a triumph for the republican system of government, to prove itself competent to carry on a war with energy, without outraging the constitution, the laws, or the rights of individuals. We should remember that we all have a common interest in the country; that the government under which we live belongs not to those only who declared war, but to all—and let those who think differently, chill those feelings of patriotism which ought to animate every American bosom.

Should the government under the pressure of disgraceful disasters, be forced to make a dishonourable peace, the respect and attachment of the people to it will be greatly diminished, and the political ties, by which this nation is bound together, might be weakened, if not dissolved. I wish the war carried on with vigour, not merely with a view to exact terms, than that the government may not appear to make peace under the pressure of misfortunes.

A few words more gentlemen, and I have done. It has been my lot to differ with many of the Kentucky delegation, on some very important measures. First on the Bank, and next on the war-question. This circumstance induced me to explore the ground well before I decided; and after a full and careful consideration, I thought it better to obey the conviction of my own understanding, than to vote for a measure which I disapproved, which I could not justify, and of which I should have been ashamed to boast, from a consciousness that the public interest had been improperly and dishonourably sacrificed. War has, however, been declared—that it may be productive of much good, is my wish.—I have nothing to gain by my country's misfortunes. While I am one of the guardians of the public weal, the people are entitled to the benefit of my judgment, upon a view of the whole ground—and I intend they shall have it.—I hope I am not deficient in respect for them, if I do nothing which I think they, upon a full view of the subject, will not approve. I ought generally to presume that the people will approbate what is right, and in pursuing this course I am certainly consistent with the spirit, nature and principles of a representative republic. The station I hold is an honourable one; nor am I indifferent to public approbation. I love popularity; and to have it said by you, when I shall have finished my political career, well done, thou good and faithful servant, is the highest reward to which my ambition aspires. I am not very tenacious of trifles, in either private or public life. I can yield subordinate points, but on cardinal principles, and questions of vital importance to the public interest, I prefer to surrender my seat, rather than my better judgment. To waste my private fortune, devote my time to the public service, and to consent besides to become the submissive slave of the opinions of others, are sacrifices too great to be made, to retain my present station, however honorable and dignified.

Some of my friends, from the best motives, have given out that I would not again be a candidate for a seat in the senate. I owe it to myself to inform you that I did not intend to decline a reelection, but to justify my vote, and meet the decision of the state. I feel, however, in this situation, some embarrassment in obtruding myself upon the public attention. Although fond of public life, if my conduct has filled my constituents with distrust or displeasure, I am as ready to retire, as I was to enter upon the political theatre.

Nothing is more silly and absurd, than for a public man to be angry with the people, because they are displeased with his public conduct.—He might as well upbraid the sovereign of the universe for human calamities, as the sovereign of his government for the visitation of popular displeasure. I have been of late much mortified at the meanness of men. There is a certain artificial class of electioneering, office hunting, policy men, without heart, soul or independence, who come and express themselves like free men. But gentlemen my bosom glows with pleasure and indignation at the contrast now before me.—I am not addressing a mob; or that electioneering chaff which is blown about by every squib in a newspaper. No! I address a respectable portion of the staff of this republic—Men who feel an interest in the government, and a solicitude that it would be well administered as to secure to them, and those who are to come after them, the blessings of civil liberty. Gentlemen, this meeting may have been intended to heal the wound which you may suppose to have been inflicted on my feelings, pride and reputation, by the disgraceful scenes which have been acted here, to sink and degrade me in the public estimation. While I honor your motives, be assured, they have given me no concern on my own account. It is true, the manner in which the feelings of my connections and friends have been assailed by the meanness and malice of a certain description of people in Lexington, has indeed been distressing to me.—But with respect to myself, I am so strongly armed with a conscious solicitude for my country's welfare, and these things pass by me like the idle wind, and I regard them not. Let not my enemies exult too much, nor my friends too suddenly withdraw their confidence. The intelligence and good sense of the people may be obscured for a moment—but truth, although sometimes retarded in its progress, is ever triumphant.

Gentlemen, I have now done. In a few days I repair to the post with which my country has honoured me.—Before I take leave, please accept my sincere thanks for this evidence of your good opinion and respect. I wish indeed, which you will witness the emotions of gratitude which now fill my bosom for this disinterested and voluntary effort on your part to redeem me from the slender and malice which surround me.—Be assured that your confidence is not misplaced, and that my conduct past and to come will demonstrate to you and to the world that every fibre of my heart beats for the liberties and happiness of my country; and may he who has hitherto preserved you in the hollow of his hand, bestow on you the choicest blessings which man is capable of receiving.—Gentlemen, farewell.